

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) filed the EARNED Act in September to help veterans and their families access higher education benefits. The bill – known as the Education Assistance to Realign New Eligibilities for Dependents Bill, or H.R. 3577 – was approved by the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Thursday, clearing a critical first step toward passage. The bipartisan bill expands the number of veterans who can transfer their educational benefits to their dependent family members.

**“Our troops have earned this and their families have sacrificed their way of life and often careers of their own to move around the world, base to base, country to country,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “These families deserve the ability to receive unused benefits and this is the right thing to do.”**

The bill was approved by the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on March 4 clearing the way to the full Veterans Affairs Committee for consideration. Congressman Rodriguez said the EARNED Act, along with other important bills like the Advanced Appropriations Bill and the Military Spouses Residency Relief Act, will help veterans and their families reap the benefits of having served our country in the armed forces.

The bill, introduced on September 15, allows a veteran who retired from the service between September 11, 2001 through July 31, 2009 with at least 20 years of active duty military service to transfer his or her educational benefits to dependents.

While an existing G.I. Bill already permitted this transfer of benefits to those who are on active duty as of August 1, 2009, it failed to allow veterans who qualify for the Post 9-11 GI Bill but retired with at least 20 years of service before August 1, 2009 to do the same. This bill will fill that need. Now, these veterans, who have already given so much, will be able to help their families. The bill's co-sponsors include House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (CA-51), Congressman Harry Teague (NM-2), Congressman Silvestre Reyes (TX-16) and 15 others.

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